

North Cumberland Fire District

Meeting Minutes

December 20, 2006

Opening:

The regular meeting of the North Cumberland Fire District (NCFD) was called to order at

7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 20, 2006, by Chairman Edward LeBlanc.

Present: Absent:

Edward LeBlanc, Chairman

John Aharonian

Robert Audette

Joseph Baglini (arrived 7:19 p.m.)

Brian Campbell (arrived 7:07 p.m.)

Matthew Gannon

Paul Lindquist

Robert J. Murray

Others Present:

Rene Gendreau, Chief

Fay Dakake, Clerk

Daniel Hamel, Treasurer

Martin Klara, Tax Collector

The agenda was adjusted to accommodate the attendance of Mr. Christopher Collins, Plant Superintendent of the Cumberland Water Department. Board member, John Aharonian explained that he had invited Mr. Collins to attend the meeting to address the subject of hydrant fees.

Mr. Collins explained that he has been at the Water Department since 2001. He asked if NCFD had hydrant fees prior to 2001 or if it was previously picked up by the Town's General Fund. Chief Gendreau believes the Town just enacted hydrant fees three or four years ago. From what the Chief understands the Cumberland Water Department was given money by the Town of Cumberland to cover their budget and the Water Department was to reimburse the Town. From there, the Town enacted the hydrant fees to make the Water Department self sufficient.

Mr. Collins explained Walter Edge of Beacon and Edge performed a five year rate study that brought hydrant fees. Mr. Collins noted Walter Edge's understanding is that at one time the fire protection was rolled into the water rate. When the water rate was built, the fixed cost of the Water Department, the cost of producing the water, purchasing water from Pawtucket and the cost of fire hydrant maintenance was included. One of the dangers of that is the fluctuation in the amount of water sold. If an extremely large amount

of water is sold in a year more than you projected, the rate payer is paying more for the fire protection and the maintenance to the system. In a year where not as much water is sold, the Water Department isn't getting enough revenue. Another danger of having everything tied into the rates is that it is very difficult to set a budget. The big question is always how much water will be sold.

The amount of water is not a fixed revenue source. There are two fixed revenue sources.

1. A service charge of \$30.00 that is billed twice a year.

2. Hydrant fees

These two fixed revenue sources give more stability to the budget. They are not tied to how much water will be sold.

The benefit to the fire departments, from the hydrant fees charged is the Water Department maintains the hydrants. Many hydrants were installed in the 1950's and do not back drain. Many times it is almost as expensive to replace a riser and an extension on the stem as it is to replace it completely. Several years ago, the Water Department painted three of their water storage tanks, water storage tanks that are designed to include fire protection. The tanks are oversized for what the water department needs in order to supply water in the event of a fire. The maintenance of these tanks exists.

The fire districts contribute to the maintenance of the Water Department distribution system. If a Cumberland resident has a well

in his yard, he is not contributing in anyway to the maintenance of the distribution system that is going to help fight the fire at his home. (Brian Campbell entered) If you have two houses side by side and both are water customers and the hydrant fees doesn't exist and we are trying to recoup it with increased rates, the houses are of equal value and one uses twice as much water as the other, he is paying twice as much for fire protection as his neighbor if you have it tied into the hydrant fee. If they are being taxed at the same value, they should both be contributing the same amount to fire protection.

Mr. Lindquist asked what type of maintenance is provided to the hydrants and noted that NCFD flags and shovels the hydrants. Mr. Collins stated the Water Department does not have the man power to shovel out hydrants. He was also asked if there is a relationship between the fees that are charged and what it actually cost the water department to maintain the hydrants and the fire system. Mr. Collins could not answer that question; he has no experience in setting rates. (Joseph Baglini entered)

Mr. Collins noted:

- The Water Department budget has no surplus
- The budget for 05-06 was just over 4 million dollars
- Fire taxes are deductible to the I.R.S., a water bill is not.

A. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Lindquist, seconded by Mr. Murray, to

accept the Clerk's Report of November, 2006 as written by Chairman, Edward LeBlanc. All in favor. So voted.

B. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's Report dated December 20, 2006, included the following:

- o Financial Summary, November, 2006**
- o Tax Collections, October 31, 2006**
- o Balance Sheet Prev Year Comparison as of November 30, 2006**
- o Profit and Loss Statement, November, 2006**
- o Profit & Loss Prev Year Comparison July through November 2006**

The Treasurer has set up a couple of CD's. Mr. Murray spoke to Citizen's Bank about the sweep account. He is waiting for documentation to be presented to the Board at the next meeting. The resolution may be utilized to open the sweep account. The general interest is between four and six percent. The Chairman believes Mr. Murray has the authority to complete the paperwork and affect the transfer.

A motion was made by Mr. Campbell, seconded by Mr. Audette, to accept the Treasurer's Report dated December 20, 2006, as written.

All in favor. So voted.

C. Tax Collector's Report

The Tax Collector's Report dated December, 2006 was reviewed. Tax Collector Klara noted \$100. in bounced check fees that also generates abatements, which as income, has no specific account. The money is not there until it is collected and the books can be balanced. Treasurer Hamel stated he would look into it.

Mr. Murray questioned if we were behind, variance vs. budget. Tax Collector Klara pointed out there was a tax sale in 2005. He has not sent out all the delinquent notices yet. He is currently working with undeliverable mail, most of which is large commercial accounts. When asked, the Tax Collector verified that the budget matches what is sent out in tax bills.

Tax Collector Klara explained a situation which exists with two pieces of property. One did not generate more than \$20. in taxes over the last ten years. Both properties were under one tax number. When it came to tax sale they were split and both properties were taxed. Both properties combined should have sold for \$790. They each sold at \$790. Tax Collector Klara needs to answer the property owner's questions. He may need to let the lawyers handle it. Chairman LeBlanc agreed.

A motion was made by Mr. Baglini, seconded by Mr. Gannon, to

accept the December 20, 2006, Tax Collector's Report. All in favor.
So voted.

D. Chief's Report and Monthly Expenditures

Chief Gendreau submitted a Monthly Report for November, 2006, including an Expenditures Report dated December 20, 2006.

Chief Gendreau highlighted:

fæ Most of the calls were EMS and fire alarms. No major incidents.

fæ Station tours have been conducted for different groups.

fæ Bob Geddes, a builder in town, donated a building he was tearing down for training.

fæ While traveling to an inspection, the Chief was rear-ended on Industrial Road. The truck has been repaired and a check has been received from the insurance company. The other party's insurance company is settling with NCFD's and NCFD will be reimbursed the \$1,000. deductible.

fæ Injured firefighter, Robert O'Neill returned to work.

fæ The Chief spoke to the leasing company regarding the copy machine. If nothing is done, they renew the contract at the same rate.

Mr. Murray asked for a copy of the new lease. There is no new contract, at the end of February, when the current lease expires, and the copy machine is not purchased, it will automatically renew at the same rate of \$115.00 per month.

fæ Incident command vest kits were ordered for Cars 5 and 55.

fæ There was a programming glitch in the internet access for the

truck computer. It was picked up by the company for reprogramming. fæ Cyber Com reprogrammed the radios. The new frequencies will go into effect tomorrow, December 21, 2006.

fæ A \$90,000. Federal Grant was received by the town to be used for pagers. These pagers will be activated tomorrow on the new frequencies. All the firefighters in town will be on the same frequency with pagers and radios. Dispatching should be quicker.

A letter was received from Little, Medeiros, Kinder, Bulman & Whitney PC requesting a copy of the NCFD Collective Bargaining Agreement.

The Chief thanked Chairman LeBlanc and his wife for attending the Lighting of the Green. It is normally held the 2nd or the 3rd Sunday in December.

A motion was made by Mr. Gannon, seconded by Mr. Audette, to accept the Chief's Report dated November, 2006 including expenses and additional expenses. All in favor. So voted.

E. Committee Reports

Insurance

Chief Gendreau stated, due in February.

Financial Management, Budget, Taxes

No comment.

Personnel

To be covered in Executive Session.

Labor Relations

To be covered in Executive Session.

Nominations

None at this time.

Buildings, Grounds, Apparatus, Computer

Thank you to Mr. Aharonian for inviting Mr. Collins of the Cumberland Water Department to speak to the Board.

Public Relations

A thank you note was received from the Moms! Club of Cumberland Hill and Woonsocket for a recent station tour.

The Providence Journal listed North Cumberland Fire District as a property seller in a recent list of real estate transactions. No one was aware of any transactions.

F. Old Business

Fire Department Consolidation

Mr. Lindquist reported a meeting of the Fire Department Consolidation Committee was held December 5. Subcommittees have been established. Their goal is to get taxpayers approval or disapproval at the June 07 meetings. If approved, implementation of the merger would be the following year. Cumberland Hill Fire District is still in an observer stage, they have not joined the committee or subcommittees. The Cumberland Hill Fire District Fire Chief, Richard Susi, was at the meeting to observe and listen. The next meeting is scheduled for January 2, 2006 at the Library.

G. New Business

Hiring Eligibility Testing

The NCFD hiring eligibility list is about to expire. Chief Walsh of Cumberland Fire District asked if NCFD would join his department to develop a new list due to speculation that his Deputy is going to be retiring in the near future. Valley Falls Fire District will have to develop a list also. Parameters will be set in order to compile a new list the three departments can draw from. Independently, Cumberland Hill has advertised an exam being held with an application fee of \$50.00

H. Public Comment

No comment

Motion was made by Mr. Lindquist, seconded by Mr. Audette, and unanimously carried to enter into Executive Session in accordance with RIGL 42-46-5 (2) Negotiations at 7:45 p.m.

Return to Public Meeting

Chairman LeBlanc announced that during Executive Session, negotiations and recognitions were discussed.

Motion was made by Mr. Campbell, seconded by Mr. Baglini that the longevity awards of 20 years or more in 2007 be awarded up to the copper level with the catalog at tonight's meeting. All in favor. So voted.

The appreciation dinner may have to be postponed to a February date if the awards are not received in time.

I. Adjournment

Motion was by Mr. Murray, seconded by Mr. Lindquist, and unanimously carried to adjourn the public meeting at 8:46 p.m.

Minutes submitted by: Fay Dakake, Clerk _____

Approved by: Edward LeBlanc _____

Chairman